

SPECIAL: FINDING SALVATION IN TODAY'S WORLD
IS IT HARD TO BE A FRIEND?
VERMONT PAGES ON THE RUN



NOVEMBER 1974

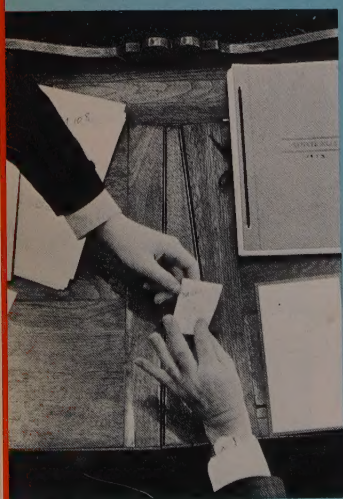
Religious Education

EXHIBIT

the School of Religion

YOUTH

MAGAZINE



By Marge Runnion
Photos by Richard Howard

At least several times a week during a recent session of the Vermont legislature, an innocent-looking young person in a green blazer would walk with studied solemnity to the podium of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and deposit a small item on top of the desk.

Sometime later, the Speaker himself, Walter (Peanut) Kennedy, would assume his post at the head of the House . . . and find a peanut on his desk.

Whether the Speaker considered this vastly amusing is not known, but it rarely failed to brighten the day of the teenagers who did it. These guilty parties belong to a group of bright, irrepressible, eager and proud 13-year-olds who every year carry on one of the Vermont legislature's most endearing tradi-

tions—the capitol pages.

It is a tradition that goes back to 1830, when the "Sergeant"-at-Arms was authorized by Act 24 to see that "the chambers are kept in good order . . . the fires are seasonably kindled, diligently tended, and carefully extinguished . . . and suitable and proper persons are to be doorkeepers, messengers and attendants."

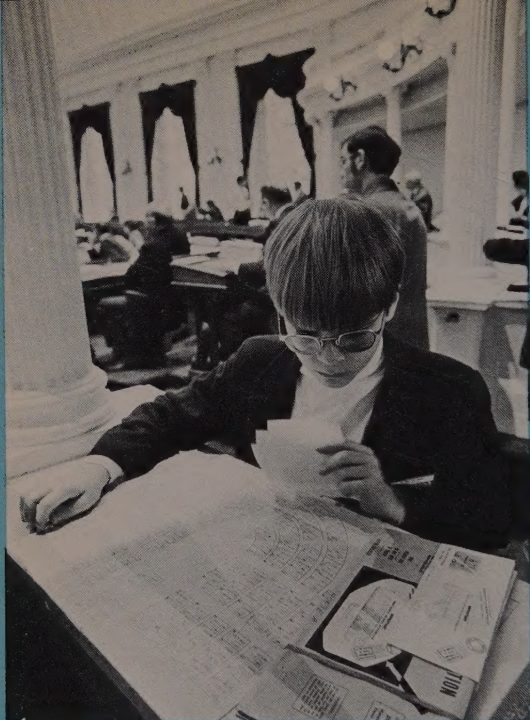
Now, the usual title given to the young messengers is "legislative page," except for one who is chosen by and assigned to the governor's office and is called the executive messenger. And if they occasionally fall into the temptation of such

Marge Runnion is a free-lance writer who has lived in the U.S. and Europe, written for *Life* magazine, and is presently a columnist for the *Brattleboro Reformer* in Vermont. Her article previously appeared in *Vermont Life*.

Richard Howard is a graduate student at the Rhode Island School of Design.

"You wish
it could last
forever!"

KEEPING UP WITH VERMONT'S LEGISLATIVE PAGES



At 13, the legislative pages are old enough to be responsible and young enough to be unashamedly excited and impressed by the honor of their jobs.

A page checks the House floor plan to see where to deliver a message.

youth magazine

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Cover photos by Richard Howard

harmless fun as putting peanuts on Speaker Peanut's desk, it is equally true that they spend the far greater proportion of their time running their legs off as official State House messengers, delivery clerks, and performers of almost any job that anyone wants done.

At 13, they are old enough to be responsible and young enough to be unashamedly excited and impressed by the honor of their jobs. As nearly every one of them expresses it, "It is the greatest experience of my life."

To the legislators, they are as indispensable as they are likeable. Someday, perhaps, legislators will carry walkie-talkies, and their voluminous papers, bills, calendars and journals will be delivered by futuristic vacuum tubes. Until that dreadful day, however, the Vermont State House remains delightfully old-fashioned and un-mechanized, and the pages help make it run.

Messages must constantly be delivered . . . and legislators are the state's greatest message-writers. A pencil is tapped as summons, and the pages move smoothly, quietly, and unobtrusively among the rows of desks in the House and Senate chambers. With 13-year-old energy, they dash up and down the stairs between committee rooms, clerks' offices, and council chambers. By 8 a.m. every day, they are trudging to state office buildings, delivering the daily journals and calendars, as well as seeing that each senator and representative has copies of all the

day's new bills on his or her desk.

In between these times, they are answering telephones, helping visitors, and, in the case of the governor's executive messenger, manually operating the splendid black Tiffany press that individually puts the state seal on some 1,800 justice-of-the-peace appointments.

The people who oversee all this youthful activity are Reide B. Payne, sergeant-at-arms of the State House, and his assistant, Ethel Wheaton. Payne chooses the young people from the scores of applications which come in, and he and Ms. Wheaton supervise their schedules, duties, welfare and manners.

"They have to be really good students," says Payne, (since each page misses at least seven weeks of school) "and they must be cheerful, responsible, and able to take orders and carry out jobs."

Ms. Wheaton adds, "We want them to leave here better citizens than they were when they came. The two things I stress the most are responsibility and good manners."

With the sharp-eyed observation typical to their age, the pages in turn are delighted to report instances when such good manners are not always reciprocated. Young Michael Somers, whose polite attentiveness would become the most perfect page, reported wryly that "sometimes a legislator will tell you to take something to another building, and it's below zero, and they never even say thank you." However, he

added hastily, "it only happened twice."

Probably the times which can try a page's soul the most are when debate gets dull in the House of Representatives, and the legislators resort to message-passing buffoonery to liven things up a bit.

"It's fun, but it can be pretty embarrassing sometimes," recalled Ann Thayer, a diminutive, black-haired young lady of Chinese descent. "The legislators send jokes to each other, and tell us not to tell the recipient who sent the note, and then we don't know what to say when they demand to know."

However, it is all in a day's work, and the relaxed, sometimes jovial atmosphere of the House make it a favorite assignment for many pages. Alecia Armstrong, a gregarious 13-year-old whose blond good looks earned her the nickname among legislators of the "blonde bomber," also had good words for the Senate: "It's more calm, and they're such nice gentlemen." Kevin Crisman voted for the "friendly, everyone-coming-in-and-out" atmosphere of the sergeant-at-arms' office. All agreed with Cindy Barnhart, who reflected that "my mother said it would be *hard* work . . . but it's *fun* work."

Last year, the sergeant-at-arms received more than 100 applications for this "fun work" from teenagers throughout Vermont. Twenty are chosen each year, ten of whom work the first half of the 15-week legis-

lative session and the other group the second half. Until fairly recently, one group of pages worked the entire session, but school principals complained that even the best of students were missing too much school that way. Thus the session was divided, and all observers agree that the new system has worked out very well.

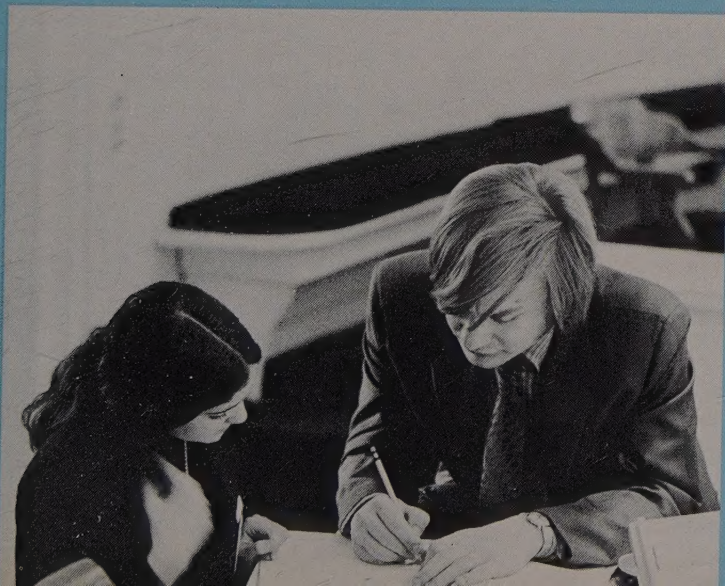
Actually, the young people do not completely miss out on school. Their Montpelier work week is from Tuesday through Friday noon, the same as the legislators', and also like the legislators, they spend the Saturday to Monday weekend catching up on work at home. For most pages, this adds up to long hours of concentrated studying, for on Mondays they attend their own hometown schools, turn in assignments for all their subjects for the previous week, and receive a new batch for the coming week.

Few have much trouble, although most agree that math is the big bugaboo. Obviously, it is difficult to absorb the mysteries of algebra without frequent human explanations. Sometimes a mathematically minded legislator can help out, but one of the pages recalled that "I asked one representative, and he sent me to a lawyer, and he sent me to an engineer."

Another page, David Runnion, confided that "actually, you learn more studying on your own, in some subjects. The trouble with school is that sometimes teachers get in the



In addition to keeping up with schoolwork, pages get a better understanding of the legislative process, a greater knowledge of state problems and current issues and increased awareness of state geography from their work in the capitol.



way of the subjects. If you don't get along with the teacher, you don't like the subject. This way, you can appreciate the subject for what it is."

Other pages agreed. As Michael Somers put it, "When you learn things on your own, you don't waste nearly so much time. You're just competing against yourself."

If the pages agree that they learn nearly as much traditional schoolwork by their independent study, they are equally convinced that they learn even more by their experience as pages.

They all cite the kind of learning one would expect: better understanding of the legislative structure, greater knowledge of state problems and current issues, first-hand observation of how a bill is written, considered, and passed, and greater knowledge of state geography.

Perhaps even more important is the understanding every young person acquires of the all-too-human qualities of government everywhere.

Kevin and Alecia agreed that "we thought everything would be smooth and efficient and formal and businesslike. Instead, people get mad sometimes, and confused and discouraged and mixed-up . . . just like anybody anywhere else."

Steven Bushey was well-known in page circles for his absorption with talking to legislators and devoting all his attention to finding out how government works. Among his conclusions: "Before I came here, I thought all Republicans were

bad. Now I think it doesn't matter. They all try to do the best job they can."

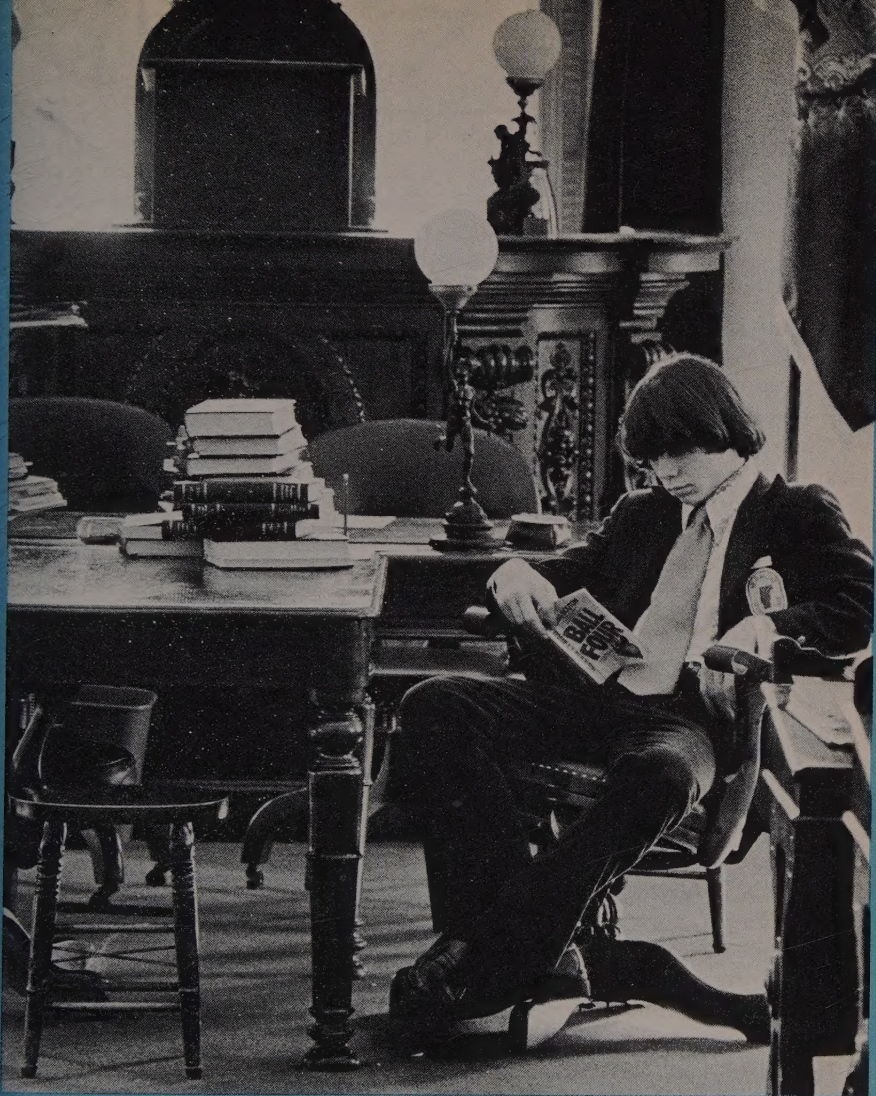
Perhaps the most pleasant learning experience for an outsider interested in the pages is the observation of how relatively unimportant political pull is in their selection. One imagines, somehow, that every page is probably the son or daughter of an important legislator. In fact, usually less than half have parents or other relatives working as elected or appointed officials.

"Sure, politics play some part," Reide Payne admits frankly. "If youth is highly recommended by a legislator, naturally it counts. If we don't appoint legislative offspring, some of the legislators criticize, and if we do, the press criticizes. You can't win, so you just do your best."

Both Payne and Ms. Wheaton emphasize that scholarship and good recommendations are the most important factors in selection. The one requirement is that the youth must be in the eighth grade. Younger children have not worked out so well in the past, and Payne feels that an eighth-grader has the right combination of maturity and youth for the job.

Geography also plays a part. In previous years, most pages came from the Montpelier-Barre area, or Burlington at the farthest. Now Payne tries to appoint young people from all parts of the state.

"It's a great experience," he said. "Not only does the young person



An empty Senate chamber affords a few rare moments to read.

"It's a great experience. Not only does the young person learn, but we hope he or she takes some of the knowledge gained back to school. We like to spread it around as much as we can."

learn, but we hope he or she takes some of the knowledge she or he has gained back to school. We like to spread it around."

This desire to give the opportunity to as many youth as possible helped determine Payne's most recent rule that only one child from a family can serve as a page. "It made a few people angry," he recalled. "They were just assuming that all their children could do it, one after another. It's only fair to give other kids a chance."

Once chosen, a page receives a number of benefits as well as responsibilities. For one thing, she or he earns a salary of \$55 a week, plus \$25 weekly expenses, a fairly exciting sum to many young people whose total prior earnings were in the dollar-a-week allowance category. Even more important to many, each page is fitted with a "uniform" of a dark green blazer, complete with a yellow emblem for the pocket which shows the outline of the state and the words, "Vermont Legislative Page." Other clothing is up to the individual, but each youth is expected to dress in keeping with her or his position, and a sloppy page is a rare sight indeed.

Recalling their first day in their new blazers, more than one page confessed, "Boy, did we feel important."

Since quite a few pages come nowadays from areas too far from Montpelier to commute, some youngsters' families do have a slight

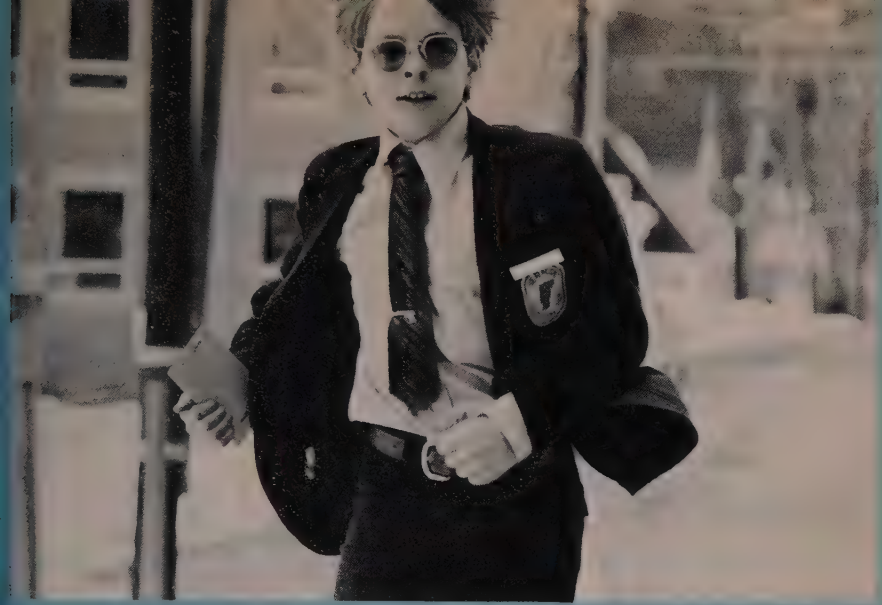
problem arranging living accommodations if one of the parents cannot be in Montpelier with them. To the surprise of many outsiders, the state does not maintain an official dormitory nor school for pages, and each youth's family must make individual arrangements.

However, Ms. Wheaton gives every assistance in referring young people to rooming houses or private families, and some pages (either by themselves or with a parent) live in nearby inns.

In former years, one Montpelier woman, Ms. Eva Fitzgerald, faithfully offered room and board to two pages every year. Ms. Wheaton recalls fondly that "she mothered them, saw that they got to bed on time, made popcorn and fudge for them, everything. They loved to go home after work and watch TV and have her make goodies for them. Most of them never forgot her, and still come back to visit."

In even greater numbers do all the pages come back to the State House after they have finished their term of service. (Some, in fact, even come back many years later as legislators.) The annual February vacation is especially old-home-week, and former pages spend hours chatting in the sergeant-at-arms office and getting re-acquainted with each other and favorite State House figures.

One of those favorites is James Loundsbury, doorkeeper of the House of Representatives. Even in session, he regularly takes groups



The pages come back to the State House in great numbers after they have finished their term of service, some, in fact, come back many years later as legislators.

pages to lunch at the National Life Insurance building, for pizza sprees after evening programs, and for a famous yearly tour to the lofty heights of the State House dome.

During the final days of each session, autograph books flourish and tears are sometimes not far behind. Messages are left in the "pages' drawer," a little-known hiding place in the official reception room where the drawers of a large table hold autographs and assorted comments from pages in years past.

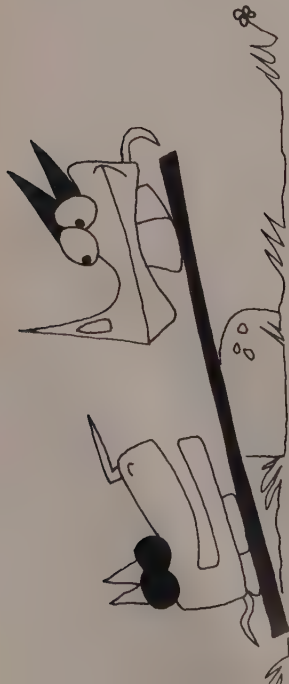
The experience that was "too good to be true" will soon be only a thing of the past. On the closing days, the youngsters linger at work

long after most legislators have gone home. One sits behind the ornate desk of the president of the Senate, while another assumes the seat of the senator from Rutland County. They engage in mock debate. Finally, the departure can be delayed no longer. Husky good-byes and promises to return are exchanged. The sergeant-at-arms office is at last empty . . . and very quiet.

"You knew all the time that it couldn't last forever," explained one of the young people, "but you just wish it wouldn't end quite so soon. After all, it *is* the greatest honor of your life." □

RELATIVE SITUATIONS

a collection of transparencies
by Doug Brunner



this is a time to be
with your family



so i called and
told the folks i
might be home for
thanksgiving



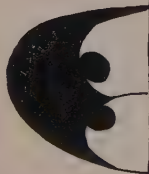
well so many
people are
visiting . . .



i had to make a
reservation



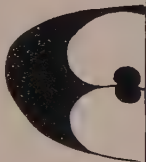
i never could get
into my relatives



but then i got to
know them



they're a very
diverse and
interesting group



i would have liked
them even if we
weren't related ...



my relatives are
scattered across
the country ...



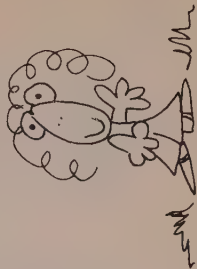
the last reunion
numbered 132



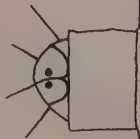
our nuclear family
blew up ...



after meeting my
relatives i under-
stand what good
relations mean



politically there's
no family line



we go from the
right to the left...



relatives debate
relatives...



every few years
we have a family
disunion



this has
certainly
been the
year of
political
surprises



maybe we'll
have
another



like what?

people
going out
to vote



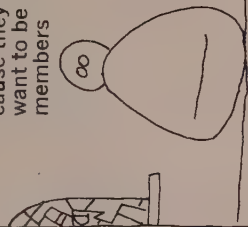
why are all
those cham-
pions of the
common man
so rich . . .



it takes a lot of
money to win
those cham-
pionships . . .



most people
belong to
churches be-
cause they
want to be
members



it's one of the
most inex-
pensive clubs
in town



most of my
friends have
absolutely no
contact with
the church . . .



yet they're
living productive lives . . .



they aren't missing out



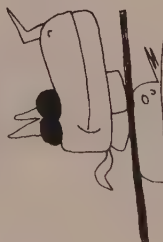
the church is



there's a balance
of religion today



we're exporting
as many
missionaries



as we're
importing
gurus ...



i have found
the way ...



give up your
wealth and
fame for
guru
maharaj ji



you don't
have any



i decided to
give it up
before i
get it ...



the los angeles home of
the "lord of the
universe" cost \$76,000



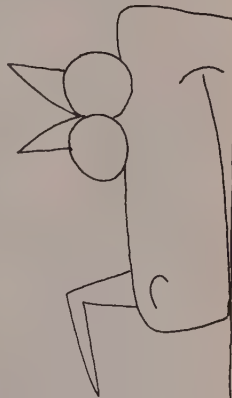
the guru's denver
residence cost \$80,000



at those rates it's a
good thing god
stays in heaven



of course the guru is divine



do you know any other
16-year-old without
pimples?



WHAT IS THE HARDEST THING

Last summer 600 young people and adult leaders from all over the state of Illinois gathered at Elmhurst College to experience Christian community and to learn how to share this experience, and their faith, with others. Many of the young people took time during that busy weekend of CELEBRATION 600 to answer the above question. Here is a sampling of their responses.



ABOUT BEING A FRIEND?

Being honest.

—James Fry, 14

Opening yourself up to someone.

—name withheld

Understanding the problems my friend may have, and my inability to help with them.

—Dale Hadler, 18

Being able to accept someone even if he does something wrong.

—Tim Higgins, 16

Being cared for as another human being and not as an object or thing.

—name withheld

The hardest thing about being a friend is that you always have to understand and listen and sometimes that's quite hard.

—name withheld

Sometimes letting friends know you like them is the hardest thing.

—Darlene Wright, 15

Accepting the person's personality and feelings about certain things and not trying to change him or her. You can give your opinions to the friend and still you cannot say that you're right. Being understanding, patient and kind. Trying to give even if you don't receive.

—Ellen Wollbrink, 15

The hardest thing about being a friend is being constantly aware of the needs of the other person. A good friend will always be able to put himself or herself in the place of the other person and fulfill, to the best of her or his ability, the needs of that friend. Sometimes we are just too busy.

—name withheld

Keeping secrets.

—name withheld

The hardest thing about being a friend is to see your friend get hurt or to have them have a problem, and not know really how to reach out and help them.

—Melody Schlueter, 18

Wondering if the other person really likes you and thinks you're friendly.

—name withheld

The hardest thing is receiving friendship and not knowing if you can return it.

—Randy Dunning, 16

WHAT IS THE HARDEST THING

Seeing your friend depressed or angry.

—Tom Love, 15

Being able to put your friend first instead of yourself.

—Lisa Vander Koy, 15

To be open to the other person's feelings and needs.

—Tom Ward, 17

Doing something for someone when you really don't have time, not letting them down.

—Cheryl Copas, 16

Nothing—friendship comes and stays with a person.

—name withheld

Talking things over when you're mad because you don't want to hurt the person.

—Mary Levis, 17

To keep on the good side of your friends when they are mad at each other, but not at you.

—Robin Favre, 16

Always being true and sincere. If they tell you problems, you must sympathize, even if you think they're wrong.

—name withheld

Being honest and kind at the same time.

—Nancy Meeter, 16

I'm shy, and also I don't always say what I mean.

—Matt Anderson, 14

A friend is being a friend for 24 hours a day, not just when you are lonely. The hardest thing is being able to be a true Christian friend to everyone and not just people you know.

—name withheld



ABOUT BEING A FRIEND?

The hardest thing about being a friend is accepting the idea that you might have been wrong and got into an argument over it.

—Wendy Shelton, 16

I think that the hardest thing about being a friend is when your friend and you stick up for what you believe and get ridiculed by other people. Deep inside you love these people, and yet at times you never want to see them again.

—Patricia A. Bieritz, 15

Making the decision whether or not to betray a trust when you know that if you don't tell, it may hurt the person worse.

—Barb Goodrich, 16

Being YOURSELF.

—Sandra Goeke, 18

To really be yourself—to share the bad as well as the good side of you!

—Sharon Kasper, 17

Keeping a conversation going.

—name withheld

It is easy to take a friend for granted, and people are not something to be taken for granted.

—Tom Geis, 16



i am a worker with young people

my father and my god.

mine has been a special vocation, a precious charge.

much of my life in your service has been as a worker with young people.

mine has been the joy to sit by their convulsive silliness and their
angular searchings.

mine has been the privilege to be present, and to wait through the
closed doors of their painful silences and eloquent withdrawals.

i've taken them bowling, answered their dorm-hewed letters, cheered
their basketball games, and held them when a mother has died.

i've written recommendations, explained their same-sex feelings, and
challenged them beyond television and motown.

i've discussed jesus, promoted jesus, pointed to jesus, and probably
done everything but all too little of living him and going and selling
all that i have.

my prayer is that first you would forgive me when i've been short,
and when i've abused them. look softly on my mistakes, my easy
wisdom, and my smugness.

keep me from jealousy of them, and compromise with them. shield me
from accommodation to them and distance from them.

take the supple muscularity of their purity and let it stroke my jaded
age. and help me to be worthy of their longings, their admiration,
their love.

—RANDY EVANS, Associate Minister, Church of the Good Shepherd, Chicago, Ill.



Touch & Go

Moving Backwards?

I was leafing through the May issue of YOUTH and saw the JROTC article and the pictures of girls with real guns. That reminded me of when I was in senior high school during World War I—of the boys drilling, and you may be surprised, of the girls drilling. We had our own unit, but had to do it before classes began. We had guns to drill with—but they were wooden ones! Only the boys had real ones. Army officers were in charge of the drilling for both boys and girls. Gracious! I hadn't thought about that part of my life for many decades. Look what your article did!

—M. R., Houston, Tex.

Not All Charismatics Are The Same

What Gabrielle Fackre described in the March issue of YOUTH in her article on the charismatics is not what I am into. It sounds to me like she was into a hard-core Pentecostal movement, especially the church she visited in Puerto Rico. What I am experiencing is a more intellectual thing, not as emotional as she describes. I have **never** gone to a charismatic prayer meeting where people are "worked up into fits," or run around the church screaming or any other highly emotional acts that she describes. I know it probably happens in the Pentecostal churches, such as the Assembly of God, or Bethel Tabernacle. But the movement that is happening in the Catholic and mainline Protestant churches just isn't like that. People are always in complete control of themselves.

—M. S., Palos Verdes, Calif.

A Reply—From Reader to Reader

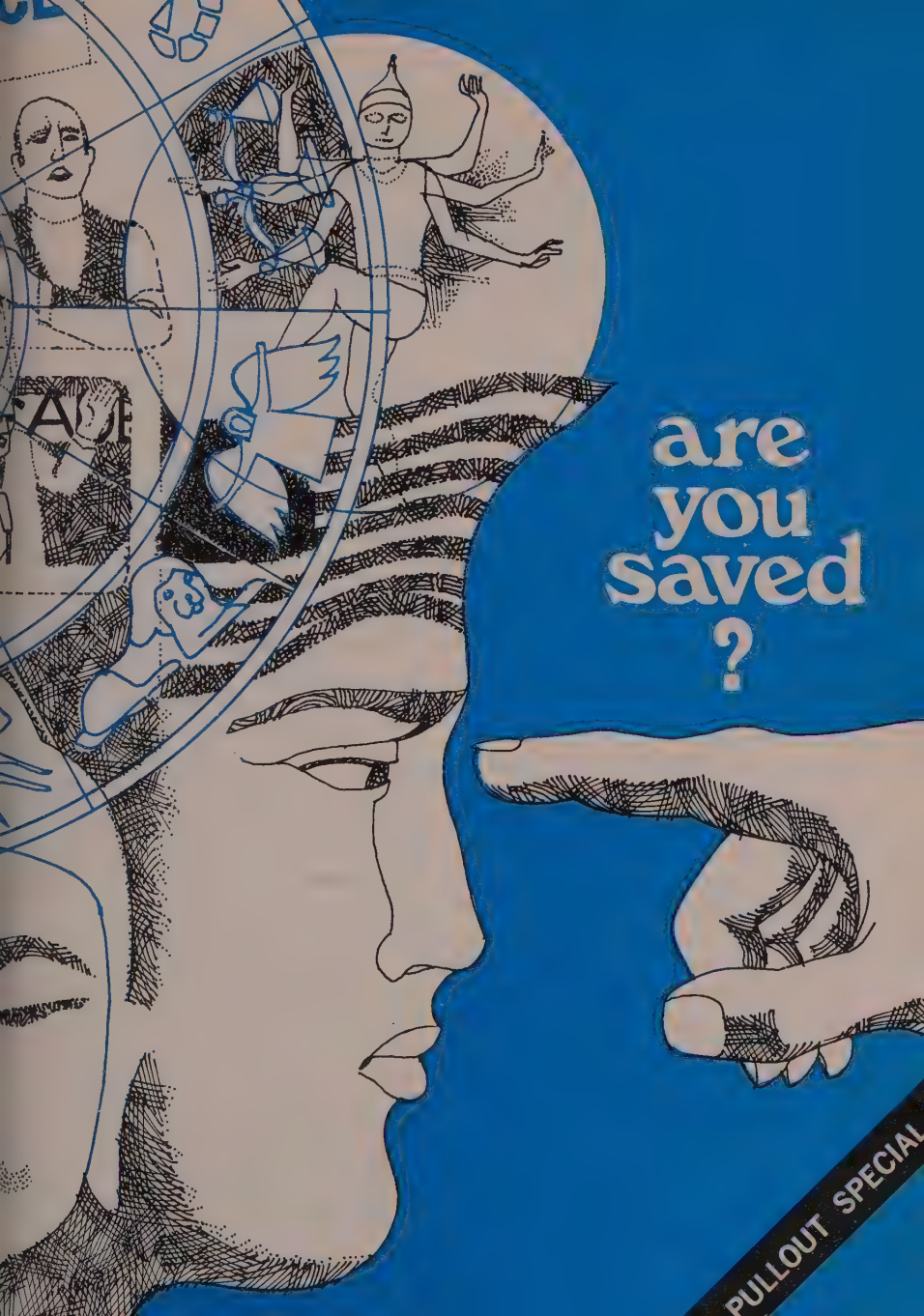
In response to J.H., from Medellin, Colombia, who wrote about his reaction to "Godspell" in the July issue of YOUTH (see Touch and Go): I'm afraid you missed a subtle but very important point concerning the ending of "Godspell" and Jesus' resurrection. But fret not. We're all guilty of missing important things many times. Recall the movie's ending carefully. The body of Jesus was carried by his companions into the reappearing New York crowd. But here lies the key. The crowd has been mysteriously transformed. It is now smiling, more calm, more peaceful than at the beginning of the movie. There is no question. Jesus is there. Similarly, in the play, Jesus' body is carried from the stage into the audience. But immediately his followers return, singing louder and more joyfully than before. Joy is unmistakably there. And in this joy is Jesus. True, "Godspell" does not depict a physical resurrection from a grave. However, it leaves little doubt that Jesus is present and alive in the hearts, lives and outlook of his followers, including you and me. Isn't this the very essence of the resurrection? Look closely, J.H. The resurrection is in "Godspell" to be seen, certainly; but more importantly to be experienced.

—G. W., Halifax, Va.

Transparently Enjoyable

I really enjoy reading your magazine when we get them. I especially enjoy the comics because they apply to real life, and sometimes really say something to think about.

—P. B., Daytona Beach, Fla.



are
you
saved
?

PULLOUT SPECIAL

A PERSONAL JOURNEY

By Gerald Jud

How do you feel about the question: "Are you saved?" Angry? Afraid? Puzzled? Joyful? Indifferent? If you feel any of the first four, there is a chance that you'll go on reading this article. If you are indifferent, you probably haven't gotten this far.

Salvation is what all of the religions of the world are about. Salvation stands for the supreme good offered to all who fulfill the conditions.

Even if they don't know it, everyone has some kind of salvation system going for himself or herself. Even when people claim to have given up on salvation, the chances are that they have only changed the name.

The word "salvation" has a checkered history and many people have a negative feeling about it, because they identify it with some hotbreathed forms of re-

ligion that try to take you in. But salvation can't be put down. It keeps popping up. "What must I do to be saved?" is a question which is probably almost as old as human life on this planet. But in some circles, use of the word has been bashful. Now it's coming again into frequent, respected use.

With the resurgence of religion of interest today, many ancient and new forms of religion are seeking to gain your attention. Spin the wheel and take your choice. And if you opt out of the religious sphere, there are plenty of others who will tell you how to be saved by education, scientism, psychology, analysis, physical culture, black magic; or group therapy.

Why are we attracted by whatever system promises us the supreme good? Why do you and I and every human seek a fuller life? To understand this is to understand what there is about your life and mine that makes salvation desirable and possible. And the best way to discuss this is to talk about you and me.

Gerald Jud is Secretary of Celebration and Community, Division of Evangelism, Church Extension and Education, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries in the United Church of Christ.

everyday life is where it happens

Everybody has to die. Death will come. You and I cannot escape it. What is more, some people I love very much will die before I do and that doesn't feel very good.

But when I think of death, I think also of its opposite—life, that glowing upsurge of energy, of the full use of the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. And I know that there is such a thing as death in the midst of life. When I make decisions, it is possible for me to choose death instead of life. Death occurs when I turn away from growing and do not risk the new and the unknown. Death is running away from my fear, my anger, and my pain. Death is turning away when love beckons to me. Death is saying yes to non-meaning, fear of control, rejection and the heavy weight of sin and guilt which have the power to drag me down and sap my energy.

And when I ponder death in the midst of life, I become aware of millions of people in this world who are born to a living death without much chance of movement toward life. Most of these are in the Third World, caught in unjust structures. They lack the first freedom in the salvation process—freedom from want of food, clothing and shelter—so they're

prohibited from taking the next step.

Surely, we can't consider the nature of salvation without considering the nature of life and death.

To love and be loved. We are surrounded by people—fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends, teachers, employers, our fellow human beings on this earth.

But we are often afraid of those who are around us. We want so much to be loved, but we are afraid that we will be rejected. We fear the big NO will come instead of love. And often, instead of facing up to that fear, we become angry instead; or we hurt because we feel that we are rejected.

This need to love and to be loved is part of the salvation picture.

Decisions! Decisions! Decisions! How will I spend my time? How do I decide between this alternative and that one? How do I decide between what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad for me and my neighbor? Decisions confront me every day, some big, some small. And sometimes I am surprised to find that what I thought was a big decision was small, and some apparently small ones have become big. And even when I decide what to do, I find "I do not understand

my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." (Romans 7:15).

Salvation has something to do with making decisions and with the vision of determining what is right and what is wrong.

Unity of body, mind, spirit.

Each of us is a body protected from the rest of the world by skin. We do not own a body, we **are** our body—a body full of feelings, signals, sexuality, energy, wisdom.

But we are also mind, with power to think, reason, remember, plan, solve problems.

And we are also spirit, full of longing, imagining, grieving, celebrating and hoping—we wonder, know delight and hunger for God.

Through the ages, many forces have tried to make one more important than the other—the mind superior to the body, the spirit superior to the mind. But they belong together as a unity.

And salvation has something to do with getting it all together.

EACH of us is potential. Each of us is unique, special, distinct. And we are born with incredible potential. We have the senses of sight, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching; with the added gifts of loving and creating, hoping and imagining.

But these gifts do not automatically develop. It is possible to live in this world and see, hear, smell, taste and touch only a small part of what is available to us. We

can be dull; we can waste these gifts. But we also can fulfill these gifts; we can live in the mountains, soar like eagles.

Salvation has something to do with removing the blocks that keep us from being fully alive from fulfilling our potential. It is directed to the question, "What am I going to do with my life?"

On loving the world. Our planet earth seems to be getting smaller

"If you were born into the Christian tradition, honor it, learn from it, rejoice in it, but maintain your right to develop your own understandings. Discover truth for yourself and build it into your own system."

all the time. And as the world grows smaller, we become more aware of the millions of people who inhabit this earth with us, of many colors and of many cultures. And when we really "see" these people, we become more aware that there is no justice on the earth. Hunger and famine plague millions. Bigotry scars our conscience. War wounds humanity. Air and water are polluted to the danger point. Booming population, hydrogen bombs, and accelerated "progress" test our ability to sur-



vive. We know that humanity now has the technological skill to make this planet earth liveable or unliveable.

So salvation has something to do with learning to love our world properly—to love the world and the people in it; to hunger for justice for all people and to care for the world of nature as a gardener cares for her or his garden.

Love frees us to hope. Last year on a world-wide pilgrimage for nine months, I spent much time in the Third World. The more I saw, the deeper I got in touch with a not-yet world—a world I imagined and hoped for.

When I saw a woman carrying rocks on her head, I imagined a world in which she would no longer be a beast of burden. When I saw a child with snot running down his face, ill-clothed, begging alms, I imagined a world in which all people would have enough and to spare. When I saw a leper sitting outside a temple, his sores running, I imagined a world in which the best of medical care would be available to all.

I hoped for a better world to come, a world that I imagined here on earth. But that hope does not come really alive in me until it is a gut response, until my whole body makes the response. Unless I can really look at that child with snot on his face, until I see and hear his misery, then I cannot imagine the good future either.

And that seeing is not always easy.

Sometimes I could not stand to look at the misery I experienced on my pilgrimage. I could not take it. My “no” blocked my “yes.” My energy is always blocked when I do not care enough; do not love enough; lack courage to really see; then my hoping and my imagining are blocked, too. If I do not see the misery, then my hoping and my imagining are too small. Full

“Fear, anger and pain are good. Next to love, they are the primary marshallers of energy. For their good services they make only one requirement — that I acknowledge their presence.”

meaning and right action are dependent upon my hoping and my imagining and that alone is unlocked through the power of love.

Salvation depends on my seeing despair and responding through love in hope, imagination, and action.

The longing for God. We long to believe that there is caring and love at the heart of the universe; that there is ultimate meaning; that God exists. We do hunger for God and long to find our completion in God. “You have made us

for yourself and our souls are restless until they rest in you."

Salvation surely has to do with that longing and with that faith which says, "yes," which says, "I trust."

So the arena in which salvation

works is life and death, loving and being loved, right and wrong, the unity of body, mind and spirit, the release of our full potential, loving the world, and finding our longing fulfilled in a faith in God.

make your own choice

The religious supermarket. If you go into the religious supermarket with your salvation needs, you will find the place well stocked. All of the great religions of the world and the lesser ones, too, will be there to offer you their wares. And within each of these religions, you will find a host of representatives of the various divisions of that religion, offering you a better quality than the rest. And we who are Christians may lead all of the other religions in the vast variety of different systems, each offering the best way.

Some of the systems have high price tags; some have low. And some have none at all. Some say that salvation is other-worldly, the best way to get to heaven. Some will say salvation is a way to make a heaven of this world. One says salvation is individual; another says it is social. One says it is a process and another says it is a once-and-for-all experience. Some say that the right way is knowing the right things; another says it is

believing the right things; and yet another says it is only a matter of faith. Some will introduce you to drugs; another to group work; still another to revolution.

Which way shall I take? Nobody can live your life for you. You are called to take your own, unique journey, climb your own mountains and walk in your own valleys, sing your own song, laugh your own laughter, and cry your own tears. Experience your own salvation as you travel.

There is a striking difference between those beliefs and truths which we speak and those which we live—beliefs born of experience. If somebody gives you or me pre-packaged truth as a neat system of belief, chances are that the power of those beliefs will not be available when you or I need them most. Or if we try to hitch-hike on someone else's journey, chances are that in our greatest need, we will find ourselves operating from weakness.

Be sure your faith is your own,

tempered on the anvil of your own questioning, searching, and experiencing. Do not buy someone else's system without the tempering and the testing. If you were born into the Christian tradition, honor it, learn from it, rejoice in it, but maintain your own right to develop your understandings. With openness of soul and with delight in exploring new territory; discover

truth for your own self and build it into your very own system as you travel.

In the light of this perspective let me share my salvation journey with you. I offer it not as a system for you to accept, but as a joyous flinging of my faith in the air, with the hope that it will give you some clues for your very own journey.

my journey and my choice ~ salvation as liberation

The Bible as my heritage. I was born into a Christian family. So the Bible is a part of my heritage. And as I have taken my salvation journey, it has played a very important role for me. The Bible is an amazing book of stories about persons and God. It is a wonderful book of stories, parables, paradigms, and symbols which tell how people dealt with heavy questions about life which I raised earlier.

Sometimes this most wonderful book has been badly used by people through the years. Instead of letting its message gently guide their journey, they have turned it into systems of belief which they then sought to impose on others. So people who call themselves Christians have fought and died, even tortured each other—destroying bodies to save souls. But as a Christian, I embrace that history, too. Accepting its glory and

its shame, I try to learn from those experiences.

All of the Bible and all of church history are mine. They belong to me as my heritage. So I have read the Bible, and I still do, for joy for knowledge, for fun and surprise. I have let it speak to me. And I have found that when I read with openness and humility, without imposing any set pattern upon it, then it yields its secrets.

But when I read the Bible, I look in vain for a single concept of salvation. I see three major themes: One pictures the human condition in terms of guilt and God's saving activity in terms of pardon, forgiveness, justification, grace and adoption. A second theme presents man's condition as one of defeat and slavery, while God's saving activity is pictured as victory, redemption and freedom. A third theme presents a se-



of images of man's condition as one of alienation, while God's activity is one of reconciliation—the breaking down of communal and national barriers and the healing of broken relationships.

Jesus intrigues and calls. The towering figure of all the Bible is Jesus Christ. Through the years, the many forms of the church have tried to imprison him in coercive belief systems, but he outlasts them all. It is Jesus Christ—not the belief systems which surround him—who intrigues me and calls me. He is, for me, the salvation cornerstone, the sign, the symbol, the enfleshment of the answer to my salvation questions. I am hooked on Jesus and what he taught about the meaning of life, the love of neighbor and God. I cherish the winsome stories told of him and by him in the Bible. And I trust those experiences whereby I find him in my heart, in the lives of others, and in the events of history.

What are the most important things I've learned from him?

"Ask and you shall receive," Jesus promised. I really believe that promise, not in the sense of a God who answers with a gift when we dingle a bell. But I believe that when we know what it is we want, then our energies begin to flow in that direction.

So what do I want? What is the supreme good for me? It is to be alive, fully alive in this world, in

the unity of body, mind, and spirit—all systems go. My will is toward life, not death. I want to see, hear, smell, taste and touch—all going full tilt. And I want to understand myself and the people around me. I want to know about the people I haven't even met. I want to imagine and hope. I want to imagine what it will be like when the world will be fully human. And I want to hook with hope into that not-yet world. By "hooking in" I mean giving myself and committing myself to its coming. So intending full aliveness in **this** world, I trust my life to God in the next.

Freeing my flow of energy. For me, salvation is liberation from that which blocks my flow of energy. Long before I intended it or rationalized it, much of my free flow of energy was diverted and perverted. How did this happen? Primarily because early I did not—and often still do not—give full recognition to my fear, my anger, and my pain. I deny them.

Since early childhood many of us have been conditioned to hide our feelings. We have expressed them silently because open expression was usually met with disapproval. This disapproval made us feel rejected and unloved, and the accompanying feelings were very painful. We learned to avoid the pain. It was wiser to act the way we were expected to act, at least when our behavior could be noticed. We ended up believing

that only good feelings were acceptable.

Because as a youngster I was punished for expressing anger, I learned to hide my anger. Because I was told not to cry when hurt, I learned to hide my pain. Because I was ridiculed when I was afraid, I learned to hide my fear. I learned to wear a mask of friendliness and cheerfulness when often I was full of fear, anger, and pain. I pushed

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these feelings down deep within me, but they didn't go away.

Angels to the rescue. Fear, anger and pain are good. They are agents (angels) which protect me and marshal energy. Next to love, they are the primary marshallers of energy. All three warn me of death, provide aggressive power, warn me of harm to my body. And for their good services, they make only one requirement, that I acknowledge them when they signal their presence. They only ask that I admit that they are there. My

failure to honor them forces them into the hidden recesses (hell) of my life, where those angels (now fallen and become demons) exercise demonic power in attempting to fulfill their function.

Fear—a signal to flee. Fear exists to give me early warning of the threat of death and of my movement in the direction of death. When fear comes, I freeze. My muscles contract, my autonomic nervous system goes to work, energy builds in my blood, muscles and tissues. The signal for flight has been given.

When the threat is real and I acknowledge my fear, then my energy seeks some place to go. For example, when there is a poisonous snake in the grass, that energy has some place to go—I get out of there! Thus, whenever the angel of fear points to an acknowledged threat, when I can do something about it, then the energy builds and is discharged. I can flee, or I can work on the problem pointed to, then I can go on to other things.

But when the angel of fear alerts me and I do not recognize it, do not acknowledge its presence, or pretend it is not there, then the marshalled energy is blocked. My body stays in an attitude of fear. I have an angel who has now become a demon in the form of a prisoner in my guts. I have become a prisoner of the demon. Neither of us is free to ful-

fill function in a straight way.

Death stands over against life and the angel of fear flaps its wings in warning at every movement of my life toward death, whether in the form of bodily injury or bodily death, or in the loss of love through death, or rejection in the form of control which squeezes the life juices out of me. The fear angel is on my side. I need only acknowledge it, but when I do not, it becomes demonic.

Anger—a signal to strike back.

Fear gives me the signal to flee. But if I cannot flee, then the next angel buzzes me. Anger gives me the signal for fight. As soon as the anger signal is given, a vast energy system comes into operation. And when the target is known and the energy is expressed at the target, the cycle is complete—the energy is discharged. But if the enemy threat is unclear or not known, then those around me may become the substitute targets. Then I come out sideways with my anger—it is sprayed all around.

Or if I fear rejection from some person and I keep it to myself, I force the anger angel into my gut, there to be imprisoned as a struggling, havoc-wreaking demon (hostility). Now I am a prisoner of that demon which has become a resident in my gut. The energy built up in response to the signal to aggress is blocked and will express itself in quixotic forms. My

body stays in the tight condition of anger. My energy does not flow.

Pain—a signal to face reality.

Pain, too, is an angel. I know its presence when there is threat to my body, when I lose an important relationship, when I experience rejection, or when I am deeply involved in the suffering of others. Pain is closely related to the fear of death, and if this fear of death is not squarely faced, I

“The supreme good for me is to be fully alive in this world, in the unity of body, mind and spirit. I want to see, hear, smell, taste and touch—all going full tilt.”

may not be aware of my angel of pain either.

In all pain there is threat. The unwillingness to face that pain causes me to avoid reality, not only mine but the reality of others in pain as well. Pain calls forth an energy response, energy that needs to be expended; but if that angel is not faced, it, too, joins the other demons in my gut and in that hell wrecks its havoc by building energy which I do not use in a straight and knowing way. For example, I may become a pain blot

ter, blotting up other people's miseries.

Angelic or demonic? So fear, anger, and pain, all marshallers of energy, when unrecognized, block the easy flow of energy which they have mustered. They have the power to confuse and distort the very energy which they muster. They have the power to block and confuse the way I see, hear, smell, taste and touch, the way I experience my world.

Thus, I see salvation as liberation from these demonic forces (restoring them to their angelic function) and the ensuing flow of energy in the direction of the fulfillment of my potential and toward being fully alive in this world.

Love with no price tag. I am in love with this world—the people who are in it, the stars, the skies, the rivers and the mountains. I **want** to be in love with this world. I want to let the beauty in; I want to be a part of its powerful flow of energy; to be alive, really alive; present in the world in such a way as to participate in making it a hopeful place for all people.

How can it happen? It happens for me in accepting the good news that love is for nothing; that it is free, that it cannot be earned. It cannot be bought with money. It cannot be bought with good behavior. It can never have a price tag on it: "I will love you if you are good" or "I will love you if you conform to what I want you to be."

That may be a good means of social control or it may even be good business, but it isn't love.

The kind of love I am talking about is the redemptive love, full of grace, that is for nothing. The love which is exemplified, portrayed, historicized in Jesus Christ, who more than any other has opened up what love is all about. I believe that he was the divine love made flesh and is for me the maximum priest (mediator) of that love. But I believe that we can be mediators of this love, too. The real priests of God are very human beings; not simply, and maybe not especially, those who wear long robes. Ordinary folk can give this priceless gift to one another.

Being accepted as we are. I believe that the liberating good news about God in the Bible is that God loves us in a grace-full way. We are accepted and acceptable just as we are. We only have to believe (take it in) and so allow our energies to flow in a good way; to be fully alive in this world. This news that love is free and therefore healing and power-releasing is the high good news. This news is the crowning glory of the Biblical word about God and humans. Every other idea to me is subordinate to that one.

My character was formed with heavy doses of "I'm no good." Regardless of the true messages which were given to me, the mes-

sage I received most strongly as I was growing up was that I would be loved if I behaved, if I produced. If I did God's will to the letter of the law, I would have a chance of being judged a sheep instead of a goat. But all along I knew that the chances were slim.

Knowing grace-full love. At length I experienced the glorious truth that love is for nothing, that it cannot be earned. And when I let that truth in, the truth that I am acceptable, lovable, then all the world changed. My first wife, Esther, who loved me for nothing, drowned in a sailboat accident one day. On her tombstone are these words: "All my world has changed since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul." It is true. The world did change when I let love in, the love that is for nothing, love that is full of grace. It did happen and still happens and I have learned that I cannot only take in such love, I can give it.

So because I am loved, I can say "yes" to death of my body in God's good time. I can face my fear in an honest and positive way by caring for the body part of me and in facing in a straight way my fear, anger, and pain. I can say "yes" to my anger and "yes" to my pain. I don't have to hide.

Through grace-full love I am liberated from non-meaning to meaningfulness; I am freed to meaningful imagining and hoping. I am liberated from the bondage

of possessiveness. I am liberated from the fear of rejection. And I am liberated from the burden of sin and guilt.

Did I say I was liberated? It means that I am in the **process** of being liberated, for salvation is a process. It is not for me a static concept but a dynamic reality. It is the experiencing of freedom from enslavement and imprisonment to fear, anger and pain turned demonic. The liberator is grace-full love.

It is not only something that has happened or that will happen. It is rather something that **is** happening **now** which affects my energy system and my movement away from death and toward life. Salvation illumines my now and allows me to move into the future with hope.

Since salvation in the Bible is presented as on-going event, a history in which God moves to achieve a purpose for us and the world, my own salvation—my own liberation—is illumined by identification of my story with on-going history, and particularly the history of the church.

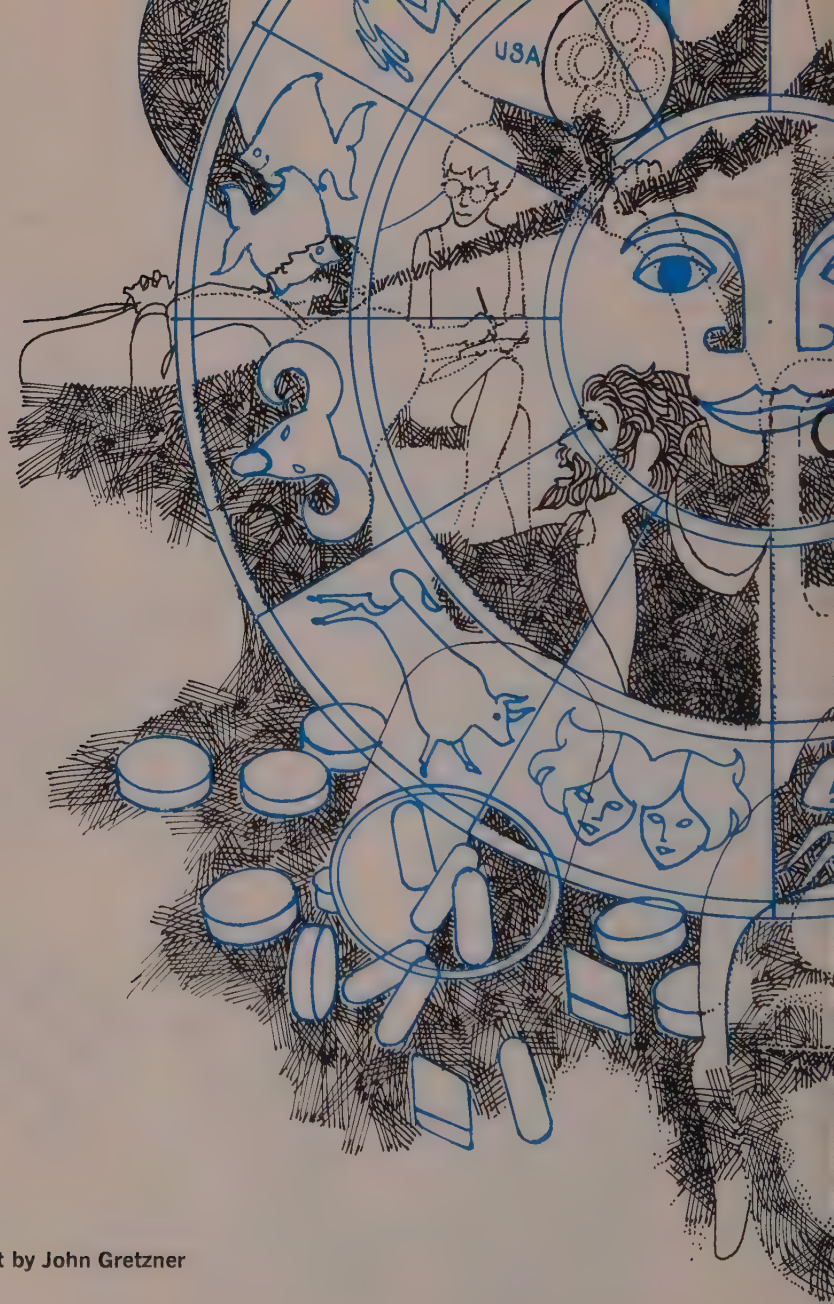
Surely salvation is process. It cannot simply be an event, although events make up the process. But it has its beginning in the acceptance of grace-full love as the redeeming experience of my life.

Different for each person. Since salvation is process, how it hap-

pens may not be the same for each person (hence the importance of our separate witnessing). It may be different for each culture. Living in an affluent culture, I am freed to take my journey without having to spend all my energies seeking the necessities of life. But this is different in the survival culture of much of the Third World. For the starving person, a salvation event is receiving food. For the person dying of thirst, it is water. For the person freezing in the cold, it is the receiving of a warm blanket. For the sick person, good medical care is a salvation event. All movements away from death to life are salvation events. But all salvation events are partial and incomplete. We are only freed to take the next step in moving toward the fulfillment of our potential.

So as a partially-liberated man, I see in part, I hear in part, I taste, smell and touch in part. I love, hope, long, imagine, remember, objectify, contemplate the ultimate, only in part. But the direction of my pilgrimage is toward overcoming this incompleteness. Thus, through my salvation journey, I move toward full aliveness in this world. And in the midst of this aliveness, I am increasingly freed to say "yes" to myself, to my fellow humans, and to the whole world. And I am liberated to love and honor God who is energy, who is life, who is love. □





Art by John Gretzner



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CARING ABOUT SHEBOYGAN'S YOUTH



All photos by Bob and Ruth Beck

a look at the outreach ministry of Randy & Judy Stortz

BY OBID HOFLAND, JR.

Who Am I? Is there someone who really cares about me? Am I *really* worthwhile? What *do* I value?

Have these questions entered your head recently? They are constantly being raised for Randy and Judy Stortz, Community Workers for Youth, Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Ran-

dy and Judy have been working for two and a half years as advocates for youth as they struggle with these questions.

Randy and Judy relate to what they call "the unattached." They define the unattached as "those young people who want or need services from the schools, clubs, agencies in Sheboygan but who are unable or unwilling to accept the services on the conditions on which they are offered." These young peo-

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ple are in need of information, guidance and support. They lack self-esteem and self-confidence; they have an inability to relate to parents, peers, teachers, school, they are bored and dissatisfied with life. Judy relates, "Some people ask if we aren't working with only a small portion (maybe ten percent) of the young people in the community. But we tell them, 'Oh, no! we are talking about 50 to 60 percent of the student body at North High School.'"

How did all this begin? In the Fall of 1971 the Endowment Fund Board of Directors of First Congregational United Church of Christ and one of its ministers, the Rev. Reed Forbush, sensed a growing need for a youth counseling and advocacy service. After discussing this felt need with community people, including school administrators and school guidance counselors, the Endowment Fund Directors employed Randy and Judy to help youth as they seek to make the most of their lives and their opportunities. Randy and Judy felt then, as they do now, that this is accomplished by helping the young people understand the variety, the depth, and the breadth of their personal experiences; the alternatives confronting them; and the opportunities available to them. Randy and Judy feel that by recognizing, interpreting and acting upon personal strengths and resources, a young person can develop self-worth, can develop a greater capacity for self-direction

and can develop an effective motivation to make a maximum contribution to himself/herself and to her or his fellow citizens.

Take Linda, for example. She is 17 years old and has been labeled by the school system as someone who can't cope, not because she has any learning disability, but because she wasn't academically inclined (a "bookie"-kind-of-student). Judy and Randy had their first contact with Linda through a guidance counselor. Linda couldn't function in school. Her parents were alcoholics. According to Linda, her parents "were constantly eating away at her." She was an habitually truant student; she was promiscuous; she was into the drug scene.

Linda began to visit with Randy and Judy very regularly—as much as five times per week. She met the Stortzes at different places in the city—at the YMCA malt shop, Memorial Mall, in the park, at her house, at the church. Randy relates what happened, "It took us about four weeks just to really show her that we didn't have a hidden agenda. We told her over and over that we didn't have any hidden agenda. She tested us in a number of ways. We were lucky we came through the tests and she came to realize that we were somebody that she could lean on."

Linda then explored with Randy and Judy why she wanted to exist as a person. She soon concluded that mom and dad didn't have much

"The community has created these young people with their many young problems, and it's going to take the whole community together to help out."

to give to her. She began to see that she would have to go it on her own.

School didn't give Linda any real vibes at all; there wasn't any reward in it for her. Randy and Judy intervened on Linda's behalf and were able to secure a school exemption, and she was released from school at the age of 17.

After much encouragement and support from Judy and Randy, Linda entered the vocational rehabilitation testing program to determine the vocational skills she excelled in and in which she could secure employment. Linda found a number of things she could do very well; she found several opportunities that she didn't have before. She still has motivation problems, but Judy and Randy continue to provide a supportive relationship for her as she struggles to discover what she wants to do.

Randy and Judy recognize that there are those young people who "can cope" and who are able and willing to use the resources available to them to do things and be things that they need and want out of life, although they emphasize that just about everyone needs someone to go to bat for her or him from time



to time. Judy and Randy also recognize there are some young people who need intensive guidance and support on a long-term basis. These young people are referred to local agencies for guidance and support. But many of the young people Randy and Judy see are those who do not have devastating problems, yet are not getting the help they need either at home or from the community. Loneliness is the number one problem they encounter. Often parents have not developed a relationship with their kids that can withstand youthful rebellion and confusion. And the schools are frequently inadequate in dealing with kids' problems. "A guidance counselor told me he feels that if the schools would hire one person to deal with 25 or 30 identifiable really alienated kids, it would end up saving the school system money, just



in terms of broken windows and graffiti alone; not to mention what it would do for the kids," Randy states.

So the Stortz's don't spend all of their time working with young people. Randy: "A lot of times we don't work with the kids. We work with the parents and we sit down and say, 'Let's look at this value thing and let's see if we can learn how to clarify some values, learn some confrontation skills and practice some active listening. Youth have a need to be accepted for what they are, even when parents are not happy with that. And parents put themselves in a position where they know all the answers—they become gods—and they pay dearly for that. It's not a very genuine kind of position. Once the young person makes the decision 'I'm not worth much,' it is difficult for them to take action

to move out of where they are. It may sound trite, but the old disintegration-of-the-family business is where it is at." Randy is a trained leader in Parent Effectiveness Training and this Fall has several groups meeting around that concept.

Randy and Judy work a lot with people at the Vocational Rehabilitation Center, at the Mental Health Center, the police department, the YMCA, the juvenile courts, and the schools. Randy again relates: "I can go into the schools four or five times a month as a substitute. I have become one of them and I sit down in the faculty lounge and my ears keep getting bigger every month. I have established a good rapport with the administrators. Then the next week I can come back and I am trying to make a deal for some kid."

And again, Randy: "I spend hours just sitting and observing the juvenile court, just watching and getting an idea how the judge reacts and where he is at so when a young person says that I am pushing stuff onto her or him, I can say to him or her very realistically, 'Well, you know what Judge so-and-so is going to do. I can tell you that I have seen him do it 125 times in the last so many months. Are you aware of that?' That young person is going to buy that from me and we need that. If we can't maintain a credibility relationship we have had it."

The pursuit and knowledge of what's happening with young people in Sheboygan is beginning to pay

off for Judy and Randy. They are being sought out by the schools, the YMCA, the churches and others for their feelings and observations about what kids are thinking about or how the kids react to this and that. This enables the Stortzes to establish a power base for the unattached young people in the community.

Randy attributes the fact that they are well respected in the Sheboygan community, to the reality that they have no hidden agenda. Young people all over the city realize that there is someone who cares, who can "go to bat" for them, someone who can help with the frustrations, problems, someone who is "real." But, Judy says, "The community has created these young people with their many young problems and needs and it is going to take the community, not just the school system or the community workers, it's going to take the community as a whole working together to help out."

A lot of the work done by the Stortzes has been done on a one-to-one basis and that one-to-one contact is really the center of their work. You can find Randy and Judy in a one-to-one relationship with the school system, with a family, with a

policeman, with a young person. "We 'change hats' as well as clothes," says Randy. "Throughout the day I wear a sports coat and tie and look pretty bureaucratic attending board meetings, school meetings, etc. Then comes three o'clock and on go the bell bottoms and my old army coat and we kind of creep around in the shadows and go where the kids are and talk, talk, talk." As Judy contends, "Any time you are trying to satisfy human needs you are living the Christian lifestyle." That's what the church is all about—meeting human needs.

Randy and Judy have no numbers quota to meet—they like it that way. They can spend the time needed with the people who need time.

What "words of wisdom" do Randy and Judy have for others?

For churches seeking to minister with young people: "Be honest, be

Young people all over the city realize that there's someone who cares, who can go to bat for them, who can help with the frustrations and problems—someone who is real



human, be yourself. Don't look down at young people and *don't* lecture! *Be a good listener!* Be really interested in establishing relationships; don't hold two moral standards—an easy one for adults and a tough one for young people. Don't make 'second-class citizens' of them by asking them to do what adults don't want to do. Meet the young people in their environment. And *listen, listen and listen!*"

To the young people who feel they are unattached: "Really learn how to better communicate with those around you—your peers, teachers, parents. Seek to get others to listen, really listen, to you. Seek out those who will listen and accept you as you are—significant adults at the Y., on the 'hotline,' at the mental health center. Seek with others to get courses in your high school that are relevant to *your* needs. Get a

small group of people together to help you as you struggle with the questions of life. Consider all the real alternatives (by this we mean things that *can* happen, not what you hope for) that you can in each situation that you face."

Ask yourself these questions: What do you really value in life? What are your feelings about those values? What do you need most right now in life? What are your *real* alternatives? Which of these alternatives *can* you carry out? Which *will* you carry out? Who is the one person you can and will really trust and discuss your feelings with—now?

Not all of us have a Randy or a Judy to help us. But all of us can seek to develop what we are and what we really want to be. The Randys and Judys make it easier for us. Sheboygan will never be the same again. □



How does the Bible help

INSIDE THE BIBLE

A series by Frank H. Seilhamer



Art by Robert Davis

me know who I am?

The principal way the Bible helps **me** understand who **I** am is by opening up new avenues which enable me to get a sense of what makes me **function**.

At times, for instance, I get disappointed with myself. I wonder why I'm not able to **do** more, or to **be** more, than I am. The Bible helps me get in touch with that feeling by relating stories of other people who have been in the same bag that I'm in. These help me to see that my problems are not that unusual. The Bible tells me that if I want to learn about life, I can look at myself in a mirror and see a person who is much like other people yesterday and today, for life is rather continual in its questions and problems. Thus the Bible gives me a new perspective for self-understanding by getting me to look at these **other people** for possible solutions to some of the problems **I** face.

The Bible also helps me understand: "Why do I sometimes feel negative about myself, and about other people?" To get handles on the problem sometimes it uses terms like "sin." The Hebrew terms it uses to describe the phenomenon have different shades of

meaning, and they tell us something about ourselves.

KEEP ON THE TARGET. One of the Biblical words for "sin" is the Hebrew word, **chatah**, which essentially means "to miss the mark." It's a term once used primarily by marksmen. **Chatah** assumes that there is a target that can be hit, a goal that's attainable, or something you should do, and **can** do, but don't. It says you and I have potential, to "become" and achieve if only we will use it. On the one hand, to tell a person he or she is a sinner can be interpreted as a very negative "put down." It can refer only to something bad you have done. But, if you use **chatah**, there is a positive element involved as well. For when you call me a "sinner" at the same time you are saying something positive can be done by me even though I haven't attained it yet. Yet a lot of Christian theology emphasizes only the neg-

This is second in a series of articles on the Bible, based on questions asked by our readers and answered by Dr. Frank H. Seilhamer, President and Professor of Old Testament, Hama School of Theology, Wittenberg University, Springfield, O.

When you call someone a “sinner” you are saying something positive can be done by the person, even though it hasn’t been attained. This is a high view of personhood!

ative potential of people. We hear time and again how lousy we are, forgetting even when we are called sinners, we are being told that we have the potential to change. To ask anyone to **change** involves a high view of personhood! You’re assuming that an individual **can** change, and affirming the person at the same time you’re pointing out that they’ve missed the mark!

If I take this term, **chatah**, seriously, it doesn’t say I **haven’t tried to hit the mark**. If I’ve slung the stone, at least I deserve a pat on the head and the call to try again. I don’t have to sell myself short, nor everybody else, but with the help of God, I can try again.

WATCH WHAT YOU’RE DOING.

Another Hebrew word for sin is **avar**, meaning “to wander across the line.” It also means to stray, or sometimes to trespass. Like **chatah**, its sole purpose is not to condemn but to urge people not to “stray” and get off the track

through foolishness or carelessness and by not having paid attention to where they’re going. Sometimes this term **avar** refers to sheep that get separated from the flock. On the relatively-parched fields of Palestine, clumps of grass are scattered, maybe two or three feet apart. When sheep and goats graze in that setting and put their noses down looking for grass as they’re moving, they tend to get off on their own. Sometimes when they look up, they have left the others behind and are moving in the opposite direction. By not being watchful, they end up lost!

So sin, as **avar** interprets it, urges us to watch what we’re doing because we **can** get lost **one step at a time**. It holds out hope too, because as sheep can return so can we. The same legs that crossed over that line to stray can carry us back to our proper territory just as well. So however we stray, keep this positive note in mind: we can change course and reverse any path we are following.

DON’T OPPRESS THE DISADVANTAGED. Another Hebrew word for sin is **chamas**, meaning “to be violent.” It’s often used in the Bible by the prophets who chastise people for oppressing others who are at their mercy, such as the alien, the widow, and the orphan. **Chamas** is one of the harshest terms for sin, because oppres-

sion is something you usually do consciously to other people. Often you plan it. At times you wait for the right time to take advantage of another and at the right moment clobber her or him. Frequently we do it most readily to people who can't fight back.

When the prophets used **chamas**, they started getting much more heavy-handed in promising punishment for the offenders. They never tried to excuse **that** kind of behaviour, though the Bible does not excuse any "sin."

Throughout its pages the Bible holds people accountable for their lives. **Sin is the result of your own actions**, so don't blame your parents, your grandparents, your friends, or society. We live our lives by our own desires. So **own** it, rather than lay it at other's feet.

WHO'S BOSS IN YOUR LIFE?

The worst term for sin in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word, **pasha**, meaning "to revolt." Often it refers to the relations between kings and their subjects. **Pasha** focuses on the moment when an individual throws off all responsibility that she or he owes to the other. The person will accept no authority, keep no commitment, but demands to be total boss for his or her life and the lives of others.

Pasha means revolt against God as well as other human beings.

When people recognize no authority except themselves, it's difficult to turn their lives around. When they refuse to change, the Bible sees destruction coming.

There are no limits that will be accepted, there are no marks to hit, there are no boundaries beyond which you cannot go, there are no people you are not to violate. **You**, in fact, have become the deity. The tragedy is that when people get to the point of **pasha**, it's extremely difficult to educate them or to turn their lives around, because they don't recognize any other authority than themselves. When the prophets use the term **pasha**, they almost spit it out. When people **refuse to change**, the Bible sees destruction coming.

For me, at least, the Bible in some ways is like a giant popcorn popper. The texts of scripture are like kernels you throw in the pot and when those ideas mull around in your mind, they begin to explode. New insights and perspective blast into shapes that give me new fixes on life. Try the following steps and perhaps they will help that happen more often for you.

We're urged to watch what we're doing, because we can get lost one step at a time. But we can change course and reverse any path we were following.

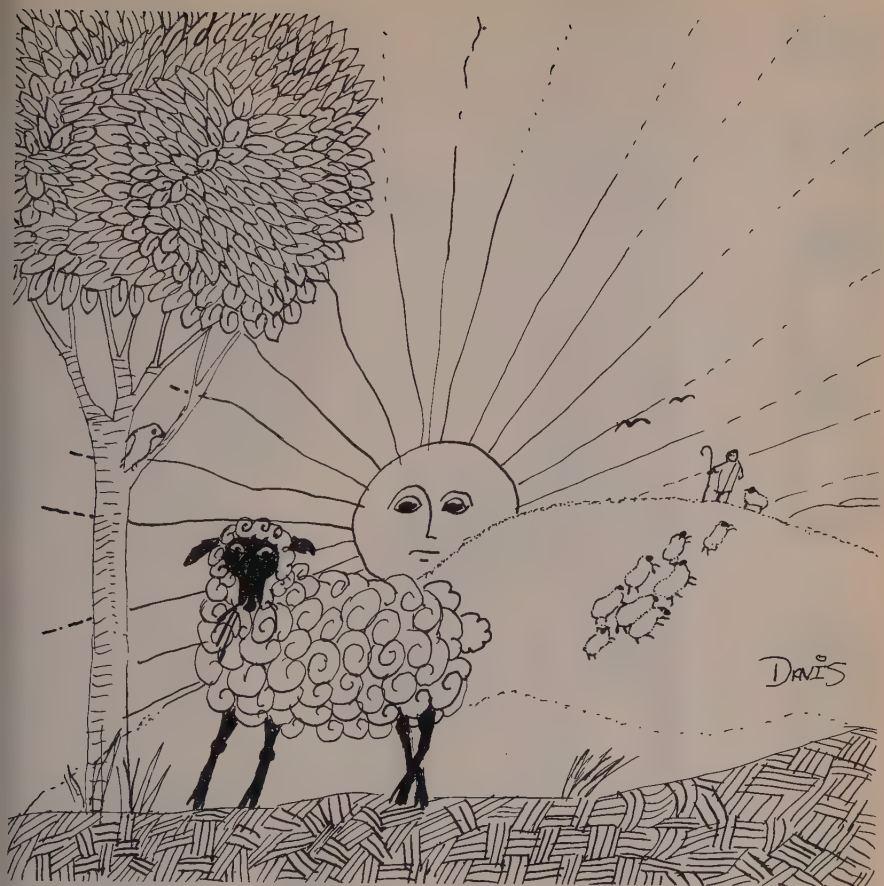
THE BIBLICAL CONNECTION.

First, the single most important thing is to get in touch with the Bible itself. Read **it**. Don't read books **about** the Bible. As you do so, look for the simple meaning of the text. Ask yourself "What does the passage **say**?" Don't look for hidden interpretations or messages in disguise. Look for what it says plainly and obviously to you. Secondly, ask yourself: "What does that passage **mean**?" Now that you have heard what it **says** ask "What does that have to say to this day and age?" Once you get some leads on this, then the fourth question needs to be addressed, "What in the world does that mean for **me, personally and specifically**?" Don't ask what the Bible text means for **somebody else**. Ask what it can mean for you in your understanding of yourself, for how you relate to your friends, for how you relate to your community, for your choices of a life vocation, for the way you're

going to organize your life, for your resources, your money, and your time. What does it mean for you in deciding how society ought to be organized? What does it mean for **you, you, you!**

The final question is: "So what?" Now that you know what a text says, what it means, and what implications it has for your life, why should anyone else be interested in it? When you get the answer to **that** question, you've got something going that's worth sharing with others.

Ultimately, people ask me "You're a Christian, are you? Well so what? What difference does being a Christian make?" For me that was the most difficult question ever to answer. Once I got the sum of those "so what's," then I understood not only what the Bible could mean for my life, but I also understood what I could do to help other people understand what it meant for their lives, and to help them to do the same with the next persons they met. That added a dimension of personal sharing linked my life up with those with whom I came into contact in one way or another. The Bible then as the up-to-date, contemporary living Word of God, became the glue that bound me to other humans as brothers and sisters. It can be the same for you!



SEALS @ CROFTS

BAHA'I MUSICIANS WITH A MESSAGE OF UNITY



BY EILEEN STUKANE
PHOTOS BY RUTH BERNAL

As if on cue, a sudden gust of cool air sweeps the bandstand when Seals and Crofts start playing their hit "Summer Breeze." The timing is ironic, but stranger things have happened to the two musicians. Before the show, Jimmy Seals, who never sheds his small-billed cap, readily expounded on the simultaneous dreams that he and Dash Crofts had shared.

The pair were tuning their instruments (mandolin, guitars, fiddle) in a trailer behind the elevated stage at New Jersey's Roosevelt Stadium. Every time someone opened the trailer door the entire vehicle quaked, but these California residents adapted to the tremors. "One song we wrote called 'The Purple Hand' is about a specific incident," said Seals, "I was awake, riding a bus, and I suddenly saw something like a motion picture flash in front of me for about 15 seconds. I got off the bus and went to Dash who was having breakfast. I started telling him what I saw and he said, 'Wait a minute, everything that you're telling me is what I just dreamed.' For about three weeks we tried to figure out what it was. Now we're learning that the spiritual world and the physical world are both part of the same organism. The physical world you can feel, taste, and touch; the spiritual world

is tasteless and invisible, yet it controls everything that we do here."

*Life—so they say
Is but a game and they let it slip
away
Love—like the Autumn sun
Should be dying but it's only just
begun
Like the twilight in the road up
ahead
They don't see just where we're goin'
And all the secrets in the universe
Whisper in our ears and all the years
will come and go
And take us up always up**

Interest in spiritual force is a natural thing for Seals and Crofts, religious men who live according to a century-old Eastern faith called Baha'i. Through their music, they have made others curious about their beliefs, but they were not always so spiritually oriented.

Growing up in Sidney, Texas, nine-year-old Jimmy Seals was a Texas State Fiddle Champion who traveled with country music groups throughout the state. By the time he met Dash Crofts in junior high, Seals was a master fiddler who, in his spare time, had learned to com-

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mand the tenor saxophone. Dash had taken piano lessons as a boy in Cisco, Texas, but, more at home with the drums, he forgot the ivories. Today the early skills that they acquired come out on stage, but about that later.

With high school behind them, in 1958 they moved to California where Jim, on sax, and Dash, on drums, joined the Champs, a group whose hit "Tequila" gave them seven years of touring power. Afterward, Seals and Crofts became part of the Dawnbreakers, an act with Jimmy on rhythm guitar and sax, Dash on drums, another guitarist, a bassist, and three singing sisters. Little happened. The Dawnbreakers played local clubs in California but they never achieved great success. When they decided to break up, no one had any money, or anyplace to go.

Marcia Day, mother of the vocal trio, had two other daughters and a big gray house on Hollywood Boulevard. The Dawnbreakers moved in, and within the walls of that building, Seals and Crofts nurtured a sound.

Now speaking as their manager, Marcia Day tells what it was like at the inception of the duo, "Dash had gone to his brother's house for dinner and there was a mandolin hanging on the wall as an ornament. He started fooling around with it and brought it home. Then, Jimmy and Dash started working together on the mandolin and all of a sudden I'm hearing these sounds come out of Dash's bedroom. It was new,

exciting, I can't tell you what it was like. I would listen at the door and they would rehearse for 12 and 14 hours a day. Every time they'd write a song we'd all run in, jump up and down, and get so thrilled about the whole thing being born."

That was 1969, but it took until 1972 and Seals and Crofts fourth album before they had a hit. The title song "Summer Breeze" gained them wide acceptance, and Marcia Day had been influential in the success. Not only had she become Seals and Crofts' manager, and Dash's mother-in-law (from his marriage to her daughter, Billie Lee) but she had also introduced Seals and Crofts to the Baha'i religion. The three basic principles of Baha'i—the oneness of God, the oneness of religion, and the oneness of humankind—attracted Jimmy and Dash, and they embraced the faith. Baha'i feelings of unity and peace seep through the lyrics of songs on the "Summer Breeze," "Diamond Girl," and "Unborn Child" albums.

"The concepts of Baha'i come out in the music a lot," said Dash. He was dapper in his red shirt, white pants, turquoise and silver Navaho jewelry, but his reflective sunglasses hid his eyes as he spoke. "Sometimes we've deliberately done a song to show the progressiveness of the prophets of God and that they all agree with one another, but most of the time our feelings come out unconsciously. It's the same if you're in love with someone and that's a



Although they are not proselytizers, Seals and Crofts are available during breaks or after a concert to those who want to ask about their faith or their music.

you can think about. If you're a songwriter, it comes out in your songs."

*Dreams—so they say
Are for the fools and they let them
drift away
Peace—like the silent dove
Should be flyin' but it's only just
begun
Like Columbus in the olden days
We must gather all our courage
Sail our ships out on the open sea
Cast away our fears and all the years
will come and go
And take us up—always up**

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Lyrics are written mostly by Jimmy Seals, but the music is a collaborative effort of Seals and Crofts combined. ("I think that if a mouse sneezed in India I'd hear it I'm so attuned to sound," said Jim.) Many of their melodies have classical overtones, but Jim Seals admits that he only started listening to classical music a few years ago. Then he reasons philosophically, "All knowledge comes from the Creator, so all the arts and sciences originate from the same source. Dash and I are inspired by the same thing that touched Beethoven, the Beatles, Jimmy Reed, and B.B. King, only our way of expressing it is a little different, because our out-



"The concepts of Raha'i come out in the music a lot. Sometimes we've done it deliberately, but most of the time it's unconscious--like when you're in love and that's all you can think about."



look is different.”

Jimmy Seals’ convictions are from the teachings of his religion. Had he a strong faith in anything before he encountered Baha’i? “I wasn’t an atheist but I didn’t believe in the type of Creator that I was being told about by the clergy. There were a lot of things that I just didn’t understand but through Baha’i I’ve come closer to people of other religions. Baha’u’llah (the founder of the Baha’i faith) teaches that all religions are one progressive thing.” Then Dash adds, “Before I learned about Baha’i I had never heard of the concept that religion comes from the same source, a higher intelligence God, Allah, or whatever, but it interested me. I found out that God teaches people progressively through the prophets such as Abraham, Buddha, Krishna, Moses, Christ, and now Baha’u’llah. When I became involved in Baha’i, I lost some communication with my family because I started thinking on another plane. What Baha’i is all about is the unification of the planet, and they’re so isolated in this little town in Texas.”

*So I wanna laugh while the laughin'
is easy
I wanna cry if it makes it worthwhile
I may never pass this way again
That's why I want it with you
'Cause you make me feel like I'm
more than
A friend
Like I'm the journey and you're the
journey's end*

*I may never pass this way
That's why I want it with you baby**

Tall, blond, Dan Seals, 26 years old and Jim’s younger brother by five years, tells what the Seals family reaction was. “About four years ago, my mother, my wife and I left Texas and went to California to save Jimmy’s soul and bring him back bodily. Looking back I can say that our feelings were all based on prejudice because ‘Baha’i’ was a funny name, we’d never heard of it, and we didn’t understand it. Jimmy talked to us and later on we all declared ourselves to be Baha’is.” Dan Seals is now performing as part of a folksinging act called England Dan and John Ford Colley.

There is no formal church or clergy connected with the Baha’i religion and the faith is spread entirely through word of mouth. In areas of the world where people have not heard of it, a Baha’i will move in to “pioneer.” He or she will get a job, invite people to his or her home, possibly organize public programs. In a sense, every Baha’i is a missionary of sorts.

Seals and Crofts say they are not evangelists or proselytizers, but whenever there is a 15-minute intermission during a show, or after a concert, they are available to those who want to interrogate them about their faith or their music. Some of

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the most frequently asked questions concern life after death, reincarnation, and purpose for living. Today, before Seals and Crofts stage appearance, several teen-age fans found their way to the trailer. Jimmy Seals patiently answered every query, but the questions were more musical than religious.

"How do you get your voices to sound so much alike?" asked one inquisitor. "Well, they are somewhat similar," Jim responded, "but

mine is mushy and Dash's has a hard edge to it. When we're in the studio we sing softly and correct the differences with an equalizer." The T-shirted boy is impressed by the fact that he is actually talking to Seals and astounded that the musician is taking him seriously. A girl with long brown hair and glasses wants to know if Seals minds being besieged by people. "I'm happy to meet people of all kinds," says Jimmy, "often you can walk into

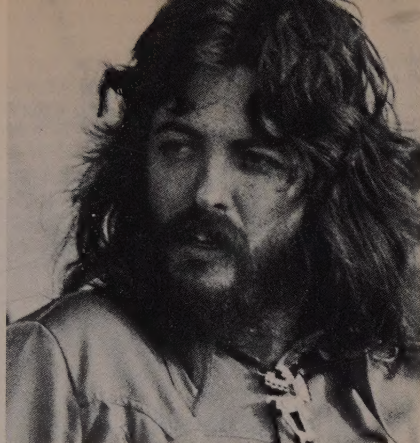
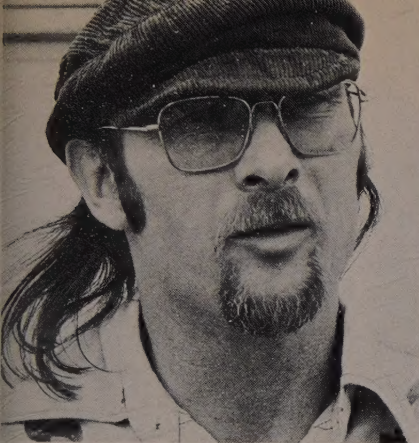
SOMETHING ABOUT BAHÁ'Í

In 1863 a Persian named Baha'u'llah, which is Arabic for "Glory of God," professed to be the "manifestation of God for this age." He did not claim to be God, but stated that God gave people one faith through progressive revelations during different historical periods. Baha'u'llah's writings form the teachings of the Baha'i faith.

In the United States 70,000 followers of Baha'u'llah bring their former religious beliefs to the faith. Baha'i describes itself as a world religion which embraces all religions.

There is no Baha'i clergy but the faithful are obliged to teach. Baha'u'llah's more than 100 writings leave nothing unexplained in the way of life style. For example, his position on marriage is that this is the most natural state. He discourages celibacy, but emphasizes that chastity before marriage and fidelity after marriage are of extreme importance.

Baha'i couples are not permitted to marry without the consent of both sets of parents (whether their parents are Baha'i or not). And while divorce is very much discouraged, it is not completely forbidden when a couple has come to have a great aversion for each other. Divorce may only take place after a "year of penitence" during which the couple are separated, but not dating other people. Men and women are seen as complete equals; and children are not raised to automatically become Baha'is. At age 15, they are given an opportunity to choose to declare themselves to be Baha'is, and if they decide not to be, they are no longer permitted at Baha'i meetings. There is no sacrament of baptism, marriage is the only sacrament in the faith. And political affiliation, idleness, alcohol, narcotics, and gambling are condemned.



"We knew 'Unborn Child' was controversial, but didn't anticipate trouble getting it played. After all, some number one records make adultery seem like the greatest thing ever."

crowded room and the person way in the corner, the one you least expect, will be the mental giant."

Seals enjoys their musical curiosity and later he exclaims, "Music is really important, it's something that's above prejudice, politics, above everything that we know."

Seals and Crofts music has an uplifting quality that often overshadows the lyrics that they sing in harmony. The only time words became a focal point was with the recent release of their single, "Unborn Child," a song not written by Seals and Crofts. They set music to a poem by Dash's sister-in-law, Lana Bogan, who is a Baha'i, and as all Baha'is, believes that life begins at the moment of conception. The song told mothers to stop and think over what they would be doing if they destroyed their unborn chil-

dren. Many radio stations refused to play the song which was labeled "anti-abortion."

"We knew 'Unborn Child' was controversial, but we didn't think we'd have trouble getting it played because of the type of subject matter that's already being aired," said Dash, "Number one records make adultery seem like the greatest thing ever. But we feel successful with the song because we received a lot of letters from people who were on the verge of desperation, didn't know what to do, and it helped them make a decision. It wasn't directed to get at the abortion law, or be anti this or pro that. It was just a statement and a song, as all our songs are, but immediately it was grabbed and labeled and it gave the antis and pros more fuel for a fire. We didn't want to start a fire."

*Oh, little baby, you'll never cry
 Nor will you hear a sweet lullaby.
 Oh, unborn child, if you only knew
 Just what your momma is plannin'
 to do
 You're still a-clingin' to the tree of
 life
 But soon you'll be cut off before
 you get ripe.
 Oh, unborn child, beginning to grow
 Inside your momma, but you'll never
 know
 Oh, tiny bud that grows in the womb
 Only to be crushed before you can
 bloom.
 Momma, stop! Turn around, go
 back, think it over
 Stop! Turn around, go back, think
 it over
 Stop! Turn around, go back, think
 it over. **

However, in concert they spark sheer excitement when they perform in front of their four-man horn section, grand piano player, drummer, bassist, lead guitarist, and conga player. During a performance, Seals and Crofts constantly switch instruments to work through different sounds. Seals plays acoustic guitar, saxophone, and fiddle, and Crofts moves from mandolin to electric guitar to electric piano. The liveliest part of every show comes at the end when Jimmy Seals and Dash Crofts call on their Texas past and with fiddle and mandolin rouse their audience with footstompin', hogcallin', handclappin' music.

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"I think of my grandfather every time I play the fiddle," said Jimmy Seals. "He told me 'people like this old music, but they'll get to where they like the old stuff, don't ever forget how to play it.' Grandfather was right."



In concert they spark sheer excitement when they perform in front of their four-man horn section, grand piano player, drummer, bassist, lead guitarist and conga player.

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